

Jaina Psychology

The subject is vast; but I shall content myself by addressing you on the nature of perception, memory, pleasure, pain, happiness, will, attention and states of consciousness. I shall give you some idea of sin from the Jaina standpoint and of penance and of the how and the why of its action. At the end I shall also explain something of the method that the Jainas recommend for the realization of the end in view.

To begin with perception, the eyes perceive an object in the outside world, because a sensory *stimulus* emanating from it impinges on the retinae, and penetrating further calls up a state of consciousness in the perceiver. Modern psychology does not know how perception results on receipt of the *stimulus*. There is talk about nerves and centres of perception, but how the physical *stimulus* gives rise to the non-physical, that is the psychic state of consciousness, is a mystery to modern psychologists. In Jainism, the explanation is given that a state of consciousness is not the product of the *stimulus* in any sense. It was already there, in a latent state in the perceiving consciousness. The *stimulus* merely served the purpose of a knock from the outside. The dormant state has a natural affinity to the *stimulus*, and is called into action by the knock. As a man appears in answer to a knock on his door, so does the state of consciousness. The knock does not create the man or the state of consciousness; it merely throws them into a state of excitement, so that they are stirred into showing themselves.

This means that all ideas are already in existence as states of consciousness in our nature. Is there anything surprising in this? Matter, too, is possessed of many wonderful properties. It is electrical, for instance, without electricity having; been pumped into it from

outside. Ideas, knowledge and *sciousness* similarly abide in consciousness; they have not been placed or packed into it from the outside, by any one.

It is also necessary to know that these ideas and states of consciousness are not separate or loose bits of intelligence, but a totality or bundle of inseparable and interpenetrating states. They are not like bits of paper held in a handkerchief or bag. For in that case they will be separate from the thing in which they are held. If the states of consciousness were separate from consciousness itself they would be like external objects which could only be known through the states of consciousness which they aroused in us. If they were separate, perception would be an impossibility, for consciousness itself would remain unaffected by the *stimulus* which would exhaust itself on things which were in no way parts of the understanding and intelligence. If anyone would understand that perception is a feeling or sensation of awareness he would realize how impossible it is to separate it from the perceiving consciousness. Consciousness itself is nothing other than the totality of knowledge, that is, ideas and states of awareness.

We thus observe that knowledge is something like a well-knit whole of intelligent states, and not a collection of loose and separate items or bits of mind-stuff, if I may so put it.

We must also try to realize that conscious states, ideas and knowledge are not liable to destruction. They cannot be made from anything and they cannot be destroyed. I can destroy material things, by burning or otherwise. But it is impossible to destroy a state of consciousness or an idea or knowledge. Drugs and poisons do not destroy consciousness; they merely stupefy.

Now think of an indestructible orb or globe of illuminated conscious states, of a radiant Sun of pure Intelligence or Knowledge, and you have a conception of your soul. And because Intelligence is indestructible and without a beginning and an end, you have the assurance of Immortality for this soul! When the soul is rid of the physical body (which end can be achieved by following the prescribed path), it will be left as a partless agglomeration of all-revealing Light, and will never know death thereafter. All those who have attained to the purity of their soul nature know living like that and are enjoying unlimited Knowledge, unlimited perception and unlimited joy. We can become like them if we do what they did to attain to the state of purity of soul nature.

Let me now give you some idea of Will, or rather of how it is affected by our perceptions and knowledge. As every psychologist knows, all perceptions and ideas affect the Will by modifying the feeling-tone of the organism. The feeling of pleasure and pain is experienced all over the organism by the soul which is present in every part of it. But its emotional resultant or effect is experienced in the head office of the will, that is in the central organ of mind in the region of the heart. The feeling-tone is another peculiarity of the soul; it is not possessed or enjoyed by Matter. It is a form of excitement, and is either pleasurable or painful. As said already, all perceptions and ideas have the power to throw the Will into excitement. We are not concerned here with the various degrees of these excitements or agitations. They range upward from the mildest, which generally go unnoticed, to the most intense. The Will always remains in a condition of agitation so long as the aspirant is not able to control himself fully but he eradicates this liability on one of the advanced stages on the Path, and attains to unruffled tranquillity.

The Saved Ones are free from excitement. They always enjoy the Bliss of Gods. Their Bliss does not depend on eating or smelling or tasting or seeing of anything from the world. It is a state of their consciousness or being and for that reason inseparable from the life of a pure soul. When we attain to success in some arduous task we feel something of the inherent joy of Life. That feeling is not the product of any of the senses, and, therefore, comes or arises from within our own being. This means that happiness is a quality of the soul. When the causes which debar us from its enjoyment are eliminated we shall be able to enjoy happiness uninterruptedly and always. To-day we are not able to enjoy the privileges appertaining to our nature, because of our association with the body of matter which is like a prison for the soul but as soon as we dissociate ourselves from matter altogether we shall come into the realization of our soul-nature fully, and then there will be no more trouble or death for us. We die simply because of the body the soul is immortal, altogether beyond the reach of death.

Let us now look into the nature of the Will a little more closely. I have said that Will is always in a state of excitement, and is constantly being affected by perception and knowledge. Now observe that when the external *stimulus* emanating from an object knocks against one of the perceiving centres in the brain we have a sensation of one kind or another. For instance, if I place a piece of chocolate in my mouth I know its taste. It is sweet. But sensation has nothing to do with the question whether I like its taste or not. The palate and the tongue can only tell me that it is sweet. Whether it is nice or nasty is not in their province. It is the Will Itself that feels whether a sensation is nice and pleasant or nasty and painful. But this means that there is a farther stage beyond the senses for the penetration of the *stimulus* from without. When it reaches the senses we get a sensation; when it

penetrates further inwards and makes an impression on the Will we feel its pleasure-pain aspect.

This impression is the basis of Memory; for what does not affect the Will and goes without making an impression on it is not registered by the mind and cannot be reproduced. The eyes fall on a million things in the course of the day, but most of what is presented to them is lost. Only that is retained which has affected the Will; which has made an impression on it. There is a change in the feeling-tone; some of the subtle invisible material of the *stimulus* from the outside object has been absorbed by the Will and has gone into the making of the impression. When we try to recall a thing we begin with a certain vague feeling—a sort of clue rhythm. This becomes clarified into a recollection later on and we remember it. These impressions are the seeds of powerful passions and continue in the form of likes, dislikes, desires, cravings and the like. They are also the organisers of embodied life, and will continue to produce their 'crop', time and again so long as they are in existence. It is now clear that we have two alternatives before us — to remain subject to internal agitations and excitement and to embodied life which is ever faced with death, misfortune, ill-health and the like; or to acquire immortality and that purity of soul-nature which, means deification and the life of blessedness and bliss. But does it not seem impossible to think of Immortality? It's incredible but nonetheless true! Immortality is actually within our grasp, nay, we are actually immortal by nature. It is the body that is the cause of the trouble. The soul's love of it has thrown the Will into perpetual excitement, and its agitations are renewed from moment to moment, St. Paul simply voices the Jaina belief when he says that flesh is the enemy of the soul, and that immortality can only, be attained by the casting aside of this corruptible and corrupting source of misery and death.

How to be rid of the body is, then, the one problem of life. The body can only be got rid of if we can escape from matter which is ceaselessly pouring into our being. As I have said before, it comes in through the doorways of the senses in the form of sensory excitation, and combines with the soul. If we desire immortality we have to shut out this terrible influx in some way.

Now, observation shows that although the senses are constantly letting matter in, it is Attention which is the real culprit. For if Attention is directed elsewhere the piece of chocolate in the mouth remains unnoticed at the time. This shows that matter has no power by itself to overcome the soul; it is Attention that enables it to do so.

What is Attention? It is the Will at tension, that is in a state of excitement. Attention means interest; we only turn to that which interests us, and ignore all the millions of other things which lie before the eye. When the Will is interested in a thing it is in a state of excitement. When I say you interest me, I only mean that I feel excited by your presence or thought.

Attention deserves to be studied even more closely still. Its action is very significant and fruitful and it plays a very important part in our lives, if you have a piece of sweet in your mouth, but your Attention is absorbed in something else at the time, you remain ignorant of it, When you turn your Attention to it you become immediately conscious of its presence. As we have already seen, there is a double action of the external *stimulus* in conjunction with Attention. In the perceptive centres it evokes perception, further Inwards, a change of the feeling tone. Of these the change produced in the feeling-tone is the important thing for us to know at present. The external *stimulus* is the cause of it. It has now become absorbed into the soul's disposition. This is the chemical effect of the action of

Attention. It causes fusion between spirit and matter and changes the disposition of the soul.

This is the most unfortunate part of the transaction. For this fusion introduces the enemy "matter" into the citadel of the soul, and its consequences are terrible, as I have already stated. The Will is ever in a state of excitement because of its love for the body, wanting to feed it well, clothe it well, and soon. This means that undesirable matter is continually pouring into the soul, and by combining with it under the heat of passion and emotion (which are intenser forms of desire and excitement) perpetuating its misery. In short, Attention is a melting pot in which spirit and matter are melted together and fused into a compound.

This analysis just gives us the key to the Treasurehouse of Immortality, If we curb our desires and control our wants we shall be able to escape from the power of matter and the flesh, to put it briefly, flesh is the enemy of the soul; it is the offspring of matter: matter combines with the soul through Attention; and Attention is the Will or Soul itself, seeking gratification of the senses from the objects in the outside world. In a word, Attention is harmful turned outward; beneficial when directed inward to the soul itself. This is the law. He who will free his soul from the clutches of matter must withdraw his Attention from running after the senses and make it subside within itself in Self-contemplation.

The Path, then, consists in becoming desireless. For to be rid of desire is to be rid of excitement; and to be rid of excitement is to be rid of matter. Obviously, it is not so easy as it sounds. Only highly advanced saints are able to control their desires. Saints, however, do not drop from the sky. They rise from the ranks of the laity. Hearing this in mind, the Path has been divided into two sections, preliminary

and advanced. The preliminary leads to sainthood; the advanced to Immortality. Ordinary laymen traverse the first; saints the second.

The principle in operation in the two sections is throughout one and the same, that is detachment of Attention from the physical body and its appetites and needs. This comes quite easily to the advanced saint. He turns his Attention on to his soul, and becomes absorbed in the enjoyment of contemplation and realization of its inherent Bliss. His reward is nothing less than IMMORTALITY and all its divine companion qualities and attributes, and so the saints gain cannot be estimated and valued in material terms where a peaceful end in the grave is the most that man can look forward to in life.

It must, however, be understood that though the body is the only real enemy of the soul, it is also the only instrument for its own annihilation. It has to be preserved and cared for, for that reason, the householder marries and settles down to a life of useful civic activity, and is required to take his proper share in the advancement of civilization and the defence and protection of his country and culture. The saint has only one ideal before his mind. He does not interest himself in anything other than pure Self-contemplation. If he does not attain his end in one life, he does so in the next, or perhaps a little later. The point to remember is this that the merit of Faith, Knowledge and Conduct is not lost by the intervention of death and accompanies the soul in its future incarnations.

I shall now explain how penance and confession are effective in wiping out sin. It is well known that a sinful act leaves a stain on the heart which has to be wiped out before a slate of purity can be reached. We have already seen how a subtle invisible material influx accompanies the activity of the senses, and how an impression is the result of the fusion of this material with the soul substance through

the intervention of Attention. This impression is the stain that results from sinful action. It forms a sort of filmy coating on the soul, blinding and corrupting it in various ways. This fusion of soul and matter is itself the outcome of Will's excitement. It is only because a man is excited and uncontrollably moved, for the time, for the acquisition of a tiling that he commits an act of sin. Suppose a person steals someone's watch. His will has led him to the act, and probably in defiance of the voice of his Intellect. A filthy stain on his heart is the result of the net. It is filthy because the act is highly selfish, and the fusion of spirit and matter is, therefore, dense and close and black. If the act were of the less selfish kind, that is, a virtuous one, the resulting fusion would be less dense and would not be black. The rule as to this may be stated shortly thus; the greater the excitement, in other words, the more selfish an act, the denser and blacker the stain and, conversely, the less selfish the act, the lesser the excitement, and looser and lighter the stain.

Now let us suppose that the stealer of the watch regrets what he has done, and restores it to its owner, and confesses his sin. This shows that he is now able to control and subjugate his evil impulse, that is to say, the excitement of his will which was the impelling force. The stain will now naturally be loosened or wiped out, according to the depth of his feeling of disgust for what he has done. In cases where evil habits have to be broken up, penance is required to supplement and re-enforce confession. The object is to remove the stain from the heart. This cannot be done without sincere repentance and regret and penance, where necessary.

I must now tell you what the Jainas understand by sin. To us it is every act and thought and wish which obstructs us in the realization of our divinity, which keeps us deprived of our Immortality and of the Infinity of perception and Knowledge and Bliss which appertain to our

being. This covers every action of men in the world, including what are termed good deeds, for death overtakes and devours also the doers of them all, without exception. The wages of sin is death, according to the Bible also. Now since the obtainment of Immortality is our aim, one day we shall have to avoid them all. They all leave a stain on the soul, and introduce matter into its divine framework. But this does not mean that men will become devoid of virtue. For action is of three kinds: evil, virtuous and deifying. A man first of all gives up evil action, then the doing of good, and lastly applies himself to living his life wholly and solely within his Divine SOUL. He does not then act in the world of men, but all the time within the inner world of the soul, in the Kingdom of Heaven, to use a Biblical expression. He then does neither good nor evil but his example cheers and encourages all those who are afflicted and distressed and broken hearted.

I think this is all that I have to say to you to-day. Before resuming my seat, however, I must say a word more about the practical value of the Jaina Doctrine. It may be that it strikes you as being too abstruse and a difficult thing to be practised by the average man in the world. We, Jainas, have never found it to be so, and do not find it irksome even to-day. It is merely a question of ideals. There is, however, no man who will not give his all to be allowed to live when faced with the certainty of death.

Unfortunately, it is generally too late then. We commend a study of the problem of life in the first instance. Thereafter a man may do as much active work as he finds himself ready and able to do. Belief once secured will not let him wander away from the Path. Its acquisition means that half the battle is already won. For belief is the builder of character and life both— I should say also of destiny. It is the unfailing foundation of Right Conduct, and is itself founded on Right Knowledge.

It must also be stated that the Jaina Doctrine will bring peace and contentment to the greedy quarrelsome world which is threatened with calamitous wars every day. It aims at simple living and high thinking. It will make men contented and just, so that they will not be casting longing eyes at what does not belong to them, nor unjustly keeping back what they have of others in their possession.

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